

Most Holy Father,

My name is Robert Van Handel. I made solemn profession in the Order of Friars Minor, and in May of 1975 I was ordained a priest.

For many years I was active in priestly ministry, but in recent years my life has abruptly changed. As I review my history I now realize that although I acted in good faith at the time, I did not have a vocation to the priesthood and religious life. It is for this reason that I am now seeking a dispensation.

Even before I was ordained, I began to suffer from a serious psycho-sexual disease. Because of this mental illness I victimized some children and their families over a long period. This developed into a major public scandal and my eventual imprisonment. It is from a prison cell that I am writing you.

I am now confidently asking to be dispensed from religious vows and released from the obligations arising from priestly ordination. Clearly I can no longer function as a friar or a priest. I would like to live out my life as a good Catholic, give good example to my family and friends, and in this way contribute to the Church.

City of Vacaville in California
17 November 1996

Respectfully yours,
Robert Van Handel